

A N  
A N S W E R  
T O T H E  
Author of the CRITICAL REVIEW,  
For March, 1760,  
Upon the A R T I C L E of  
Mrs. NIHELL's T R E A T I S E  
O N T H E  
A R T of MIDWIFERY.

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By Mrs. ELIZABETH NIHELL,  
P R O F E S S E D M I D W I F E.

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M D C C L X.

A N S W E R

TO THE

Author of the Critical Review

For March 1790

Upon the Art of Poetry

Mr. MILLER'S Translation

ON THE

ART OF MIDWINTER

By WILLIAM MILLER

LONDON

Printed by J. DODD

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1790



A N

## A N S W E R, &c.



ON seeing the strange attack made in the Critical Review for the month of March, 1760, upon a treatise offered by me to the Public, with the best intention imaginable for its service, upon the subject of midwifery, which is my profession, I can safely, and with the greatest regard for truth, aver, that if the manner in which I found myself there treated, gave me any pain, that pain was not for myself. I was even sorry to observe any gentleman of letters stooping so low, as to the poorest buffoonry, and to the so little respecting the Public and himself as to play upon names; a circumstance of no-wit, which I have so favorable an opinion of him, as to presume he would have

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treated



treated with all the scorn it deserves, if employed against himself.

But the reason he gives for this *punning* is in truth an admirable one. He assumes the subject discussed to be a *ludicrous* one. A ludicrous one! what! can the subject of discussion, which is palpably neither more nor less than the greater safety of the lives of women and children, be deemed, by any construction or intendment, a *ludicrous* one?

But at this I am not indeed surprized, when I consider, that in this every candid article of Review, the writer is not contented with poisoning and distorting a most innocent and inoffensive application from a woman to one of her own sex, for her hand to chafe the hypogastrium, into a suit for "*titillation*", but he must grossly and unprovokedly insult the women with the assurance, that if they were to be pleased with *titillation*, the *art* of it was better understood by the *men* than by the *women*. If this to husbands, to fathers, to relations, is *defending* the use of *be-midwives*, I leave to their own consideration. I leave it also to their consideration, whether their understanding can be more shamelessly insulted, than by that averment of the Reviewer:

" that



" *that the business (of midwifery) is carried on*  
 " *with much more EASE and DECORUM by*  
 " *the men than by the women-practitioners,*  
 " *excepting such of these last as have been EDU-*  
 " *CATED under MALE-ARTISTS."* That  
 is to say, educated to cut out WORK for their  
 INSTRUMENTS, without which the male-  
 artists are so sensible they would be so per-  
 fectly insignificant. The reflections upon  
 this are so obvious, that to dwell upon it  
 would imply my taking husbands, fathers,  
 and relations for rank ideots; and it is not  
 for such that reasoning is made.

But before I proceed any further in my  
 defence, I must beg leave to remark, that  
 my candid critic seems to have over-stepped  
 his province of a Reviewer into that of a  
 controverfist; which certainly cannot be fair,  
 unless he gives warning to his reader, that he  
 is laying aside the character of the judge for  
 that of a party. He cannot surely consist-  
 ently with the laws of candor or common-  
 sense be both at once.

Even but as a Reviewer he is doubtless at li-  
 berty to give his opinion of my book as un-  
 favorably as he pleases. He may condemn  
 the stile of an essayist, who sets out with a

solemn profession of a disclaimer of all pretensions to stile; he may, as he has done, emphatically assure the reader, that a treatise of midwifery professedly wrote to expose the errors introduced into the art, does not itself give a regular System of the art; he may, in short, in virtue of his office of Reviewer, issue out his censure of a book that has, it seems, the honor to displease him; but surely, all this liberty does not warrant its extention not only to miserably low scurrility, but even to a most unfair wresting of quotations, and to an acrimony, which rather denotes a *party* interested and hurt, than an *impartial* Reviewer.

For example, he attempts to palm on the reader a most strained and false construction of a passage he quotes from my work (p. 90) where I speak, and very justly speak of the fatigue I have often undergone, of keeping my hands “*fixedly* employed for many hours “ together, in reducing and preserving the “ uterus in a due position.” The critic here exclaims against this as cruelty. Now, if there was any cruelty in this *fixed* position, it could at worst be only a less cruelty than that which it is meant to prevent, the cruel  
and



and dangerous use of iron or steel instruments. But the truth is, there is not, in this point of practice, so much as the shadow of cruelty, or indeed of any prejudice whatever to the woman in labor, whose safety both of herself and child is consulted by it. If the reader deigns to consult the passage connected as it is, in that page 90, he will readily, if he has any the least share of candor, admit, that in that place particularly, the word "*hands*" is indefinitely employed; a whole for the part; there being in that passage no particular instruction of management proposed to be conveyed. But where that management requires specification, the distinction is duly made, as the reader may easily satisfy himself, p. 348, where it will appear how perfectly inoffensive, and even salutary that employ of the midwife's hands must be where the case requires it. Doubtless a forceps or a crotchet are infinitely *tenderer*. Of this I am clearly sure, that any reader of candor and humanity will, on perusal of that passage, feel a just indignation at the unfair treatment both of himself and me, in the use attempted to be made of that quotation against me from p. 90, the expression in  
which



which might however have been more clear, if I could have imagined that it could have given rise to a construction so shocking to common-sense, as that on which the critic has founded his pathetic exclamation of a midwife's *two hands* in the vagina ! if he really understood me so, I heartily pity him : if he has designedly given me that meaning, I have a right to pity him yet more, as disingenuity is surely more pitiful than only misapprehension.

To the question the Reviewer asks me, relative to the vitious conformation of the pelvis, and concerning which he accuses me of *flagrant ignorance*, “ whether I have ever “ seen a collection of skeletons ? ” I answer, that I have occasionally seen skeletons, but without the least reason to retract what I have said of the *almost* universal care of Nature in the due conformation of the pelvis. It is also true, that I have cast around my eyes, and observed a number of rickety children and crooked women, both in this metropolis and elsewhere ; but I never had reason either from sense, or especially from my own experience, to form the Reviewer's conclusion from such ricketiness to the distortion

of the pelvis. On the contrary, I have delivered many richety women, many outwardly distorted women, whose deformity was even legible in their faces, but never found that it in the least affected the bones of the pelvis. One would even think, that Nature had indemnified them in that particular, for her irregularities in other respects. I have no reason, from my own practice, but to think them, in proportion to their number, blessed with easier deliveries than the very best shaped, who have sometimes such difficult labors, notwithstanding the most excellent outward conformation: nor do I conceive those difficult labors of theirs to be owing to any bad conformation of the pelvis, or at least infinitely less often than to that obliquity of the uterus, which I have so truly stated in that work so abused by the Reviewed. I own then, that without the least pretention to more anatomy than is competent to my profession, I look on that ingenious argument, in the Reviewer, of bones softened by a rickety disorder, and necessarily giving way or suffering distortion by a super-incumbent pressure, to be absolutely void of foundation, and to be even as false  
in



in theory, as I have ever found it in practice. For the truth however of this, I appeal with due submission to surgeons, not men-midwives. My critic states the case of a child's head being more than five inches diameter and the distance between the jetting in of the os sacrum and the bones of the pubis to be but two inches: upon which he asks how can five pass through two. I reply to this that knowing very well, that the disproportion of the head to the passage, is sometimes amazingly great, though scarce ever so great as that, I have already answered the objection founded thereon. I repeat my answer here, that Nature, or in other words, the Divine Providence, has so ordered it, that the child's head moulds itself to this narrowness, by the parietal bones sliding the one over the other, and thus their heads come into the world somewhat of a conic form; especially the first-born.

But where a few lines afterwards he objects another difficulty of a middle-sized child where the distance between the os sacrum and the os pubis is but an inch; in which he also asks what I would do; I candidly answer, in the first place, that I do not believe



the possibility of such a case, or believe at least that it is one of those so monstrous, so prodigious rare ones, as that it would be the blindest of all reasoning to draw any practical inference therefrom. Till I then see such a case, as that of only one inch distance between the os sacrum and the os pubis, I humbly beg leave to rank it among those filbug-bears, with which the men-midwives frighten the ignorant into the admission of their being necessary: and I dare say, they might as justly ask of me what I would do, if I met with my grandmother's ghost, as what I would do if I met with such a case. But, at the worst, I would undertake, even in such a case, supposing its existence, for argument-sake, to do what was to be done as well with my *long, sensitive, shrewd taper* fingers, as they would do with their blessed *notchet*, or forceps. And here I just transitively reply to the critic's charge of my not knowing the difference between those instruments. For the truth of this charge I appeal to the work itself; with this further inadvertion, that my doctrine for the utter rejection of instruments in general is certainly

no proof that I do not know them perfectly well.

But to return to our facetious critic  
 “ We apprehend (says he) this learned midwife  
 “ wife has forgot herself in the following  
 “ paragraph.

“ *As to the preternatural delivery, the best  
 “ practice is not to delay the extraction of  
 “ fœtus, after the discharge of the waters, to  
 “ stay till her strength shall be exhausted, on  
 “ presenting a fair bold, and a sufficient opportunity,  
 “ ture, no difficulty should be made of extracting  
 “ but suppose (continues the critic) a fair  
 “ hold does not present, what is then  
 “ to be done? Truly, Mrs. Nihell, we cannot  
 “ see through what overture you will deliver  
 “ yourself from this dilemma, unless you  
 “ have recourse to the man-midwife’s  
 “ of hardware.”*

Heavens forbid! the remedy would be worse than the disease. But what a strange ignorance does such an objection betray! Those who have but a competent knowledge of the art of midwifery will acknowledge, that if a child does not present in the natural manner, whatever posture besides it presents itself, it must be extracted footling, as soon as



waters are discharged, and on a sufficient  
 dilatation of the os internum. In these cases,  
 in truth in all others, the crotchets or  
 forceps are absolutely execrable practice. The  
 manual method I propose will, with incom-  
 parably more safety and ease, bid fair to pre-  
 serve the lives of mother and child: and in-  
 deed, in these preternatural labors, the mo-  
 ther suffers, generally speaking, less than  
 when the child comes by the head. The  
 midwife it is that has the most fatigue. I  
 now Dr. Smellie's method leads more to the  
 extremity pleaded by him and his ressemblers,  
 an apology for severing heads, and pulling off  
 limbs. But if instead of rejecting, or at least  
 resorting so often as he should to this foot-  
 ing extraction, he had adopted my method,  
 he might, in the course of his practice, have  
 perhaps to reproach himself with fewer  
 sacrifices of mothers and children to his learn-  
 ing errors.

As to the case of a monster of two heads,  
 I have already answered it, in my treatise:  
 which I add the following inforcement.  
 I admit, that in twenty millions of persons,  
 once in fifty years, such a birth as that of a  
 child with two heads, may, by great chance,



happen. But what then? is the existence of barely such a possibility to be offered as a reason, for its being necessary to incourage a set of men, whose practice palpably tends, in such a given number as that twenty millions, to destroy mothers and children by thousands? but further, though I have proved, that a woman big with such a monster, might and was delivered by a midwife, without recourse to a man, with safety to her life, yet I wave that example. I candidly confess, that such a delivery is not what is called *woman's work*; but then neither is it more a man-midwife's, unless he should be also a surgeon of such consummate skill as I believe is rarely met with in the common run of men-midwives.

But as to the *hydrocephalous head* objected to me with such an air of defiance; how shall I answer it? Why, by facts, undeniable facts. I dare affirm, that I have myself delivered numbers without needing any recourse to men-midwives, or to instruments. It is not above four years ago that I delivered Mrs. Compagnon, a tradesman's wife of Brownlow-street, within two doors of lying-in hospital, whose child was one of

lust

lustiest I ever saw, and the greatest hydrocephale. It had been before I delivered her dead, at least a month before, from a pottier having unmercifully pushed her against a post, as she was going along. As soon as the head came out of the *os externum*, it extended as large as a calf's liver, without solidity or consistence, to the astonishment of the by-standers. I then got it out intire by the shoulders, but quite putrified.

In the month of February last I delivered a poor woman, a soldier's wife, over against where I live, by name Knowles, of such another hydrocephalous child, without dismembëring it, or without any laceration or damage to the mother. These children are commonly so macerated in the waters, so soft, so flexible, that they easily yeild to the contraction of the hypogastric muscles in the expulsive efforts.

And here, for my having quoted these two examples, among many others I could produce from my own practice, I gladly throw myself on the reader's candor for his distinguishing, upon his considering the provocation, between the designingness of quackery in self-recommendation, and the obvious necessity



necessity of self-defence, where so cruelly and so dis-ingeniously attacked.

Among other instances of the Reviewer's disingenuity of treatment, the following one is not perhaps the least. It is where he imputes a point of erroneous doctrine to me, in prescribing in case of considerable loss of blood after delivery, followed with faintings and oppressions, that the patient should be stirred, excited to cough and sneeze, contributively to the evacuation of the blood, which otherwise is apt to clot in the uterus, and would suffocate her if not expelled. Upon which a reference to the book itself, p. 264. will plainly show, that I speak there not of all hemorrhages indistinctly, in which I would be so far from tormenting or endangering the patient by excitals, that I would rather recommend quiet with sub-astringent draughts, that should strengthen without heating: but there I speak purely and solely of those hemorrhages, which form clots of blood in the uterus, and sometimes the vagina, which obstruct them in such a manner, that the circulation being stopped, the woman loses all sense, faints and dies, if on failure of those gently encouraged pre-excitals, she is not instantly



instantly disembarassed from the clotted blood, which is then become an extraneous body. This is done by introducing the hand (*is this a man's handy-work?*) and clearing this bowel or uterus of all its incumbrance. The patient immediately comes to herself again, without having so much as felt the operation of the hand. It is these concretions of blood that are commonly called, bleeding inwardly. Numbers of women lose their life in these cases if not instantly relieved. Yet is this accident much neglected, and even little understood by many men-practitioners, and even by some midwives. Thence those deaths imputed to OCCULT CAUSES, as may be seen, p. 128 and 265 of my book.

The Reviewer makes a great crime to me, of having substituted a word of a new coinage *pudendist* to the term of *accoucheur*. I hope however it will be some mitigation of the violent offence given him in it, that it was taken from a word often and certainly always *innocently* repeated by Dr. Smellie. He may find not only *pudendi* (with the word *labia* that governs it) occasionally used, and to which I have only added the two innocent letters, s and t, but the occupation of a *pudendist*  
in

in curing the *maladies* incident to the *pudenda*, in more cases than one: for I presume the *maladies* of that part are not intirely confined to that against which the washing of the leather-wrappers of the forceps is recommended. For example; what does he think of the following quotation from Dr. Smellie, p. 151?

“ If the *skin* of the legs and PUDENDA is  
“ *excessively stretched*, so as to be violently pain-  
“ *ed*, the patient will be greatly relieved by  
“ PUNCTURING the parts occasionally.”

Upon which I cannot help observing, that this pretended relief is ofteneft attended with worse consequences to those parts, than suffering a little temporary uneasiness; since that same puncturing produces much more painful sores, or at least sores of longer continuance afterwards. The best practice, I humbly apprehend, being to leave those ferocities to the course of Nature, since they infallibly vanish after delivery.

The scheme of puncturing the *pudenda*, however, must be a pretty amusement for a *pudendist*, whatever is the greater suffering for it afterwards to the deluded woman, that will submit to it.

Do



Do I then deserve, from this pretended critic, such an insulting reproach of immodesty, for giving to the he-midwives (so hard as they are driven for a name, that they are forced to run to France for the French one of *accoucheur*) an appellation which seems to me not to characterise them amiss, and belongs to them at least as justly, as those of *dentist* or *oculist* to those artists respectively, who take under their protection any particular part of the human body? is it my fault, if men will so pitifully mistake their occupations, and voluntarily, for the sake of dirty lucre, degrade themselves to offices so shameful, that the very properest name of them puts the modesty of our Reviewer to the blush?

As for me who have professedly treated of midwifery, I hope no person of any candor will find, that I have offered, or at least meant to offer any offence to decency in the terms I have been forced to employ in the course of my subject. A physician, a surgeon, an anatomist, may, and ever do, unpleaded of immodesty, use words that would be liable to objection, on any other footing, than that obvious utility which even

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sanctifies

sanctifies their use. I presume there will not, in the whole essay, be found one such barbarous attempt upon wit, humor, or common decency, as that contained in the following quotation from the so squeamishly affected critic I am now answering.

Crit. Rev. p. 196. "How far Mrs. Ni-  
 "hell's *shreud, supple, sensitive* fingers may  
 "be qualified for the *art of titillation*, we  
 "shall not pretend to investigate; but those  
 "women that are *pleased* with this operation  
 "before the pains come on, may certainly  
 "choose their own operator, without affecting  
 "the *art of midwifery*; we cannot help  
 "thinking, that in this case, the *male-prac-*  
 "itioner would not be the most *disagreea-*  
 "ble, unless our author has talents that way  
 "which we cannot conceive."

In which passage I own I cannot well pronounce which is the greatest, the *modesty* of it, or the *delicacy of compliment* to the women.

But as the Reviewer, in more places than this, harps, no doubt with great pleasantness and humor, upon the poor midwife's "*long*  
 "*nimble, taper, shreud, sensible, palpating fin-*  
 "*gers:*" by way, I presume, of preferring highly to them the short, stubbed, clumsy



rough, callous ones of a he-midwife, I must tell him, there is one use to which I hope a true midwife will, for her own sake, as well as for that of her patient, never put her fingers, though the practice of it is recommended by Dr. Smellie, in more parts than one of his work, I mean, the practice of running the fingers up the fundament or anus. For example, p. 212. He says, “ when the head “ is therefore drawn back by any of these “ obstacles, and the delivery hath been re- “ tarded during several pains, *one or two fin- “ gers* being introduced into the *Rectum* “ before the pain goes off, ought to *press* “ upon the forehead of the child at the *root* “ of the *nose*, great care being taken to *avoid* “ the EYES.” As to taking such care of the eyes I highly commend the caution, but cannot well conceive how such an *operation* can well be insured against *poking* them out, considering how the operator must grope darkling. But how such a thought could enter into a man’s head I cannot conceive, as thrusting his fingers there, for any beneficial purpose. In the first place, it can be absolutely of no service, and may do infinite mischief: to say nothing of the torture to which

it must put a woman, especially if she should happen to have, what is very frequently the case in that juncture, the hemorrhoids. In short, I do not conceive that there can be imagined a more nauseous, ridiculous, cruel, absurd management; and if such are the triumphs of the men's learning over the women's ignorance, may the women continue their ignorance still of such curious practice!

In the mean while the Reviewer accuses me, very unjustly of *pecking*, as he is pleased to term it, particularly at Dr. Smellie. I solemnly declare, nothing could be further from my intention. He is a gentleman from whom I never have or could receive the least injury. Every thing that I have mentioned relative to him, even to clumsiness of fingers, which I rather suppose, on his being a man, than imagine particular to him, has been intirely on the account of my objections, to the practice of the art of midwifery by men, and no-wise out of any particular personality against himself. I could even ask his pardon for any such cause of offence, so abhorrent from my way of thinking, if I had been betrayed into it by the heat of opposition.



position. But I hope I have not so much as incurred the least danger of blame on that account. I have not once, like the Reviewer, stated any doubt about the book that goes under his name being of his own writing or not. It would have been, perhaps, less a shame in me, who am purely by profession a midwife and no author, to avail myself of the assistance of my friends, in the composition of my work, than in the learned Dr. Smellie; but certainly, even with his borrowing such help, neither the Public nor I have any concern. It is with his doctrine, and points of practice, that I have only a right to meddle. Neither do I attack his stile or his manner of composition: on the contrary, if my opinion was worth offering, I should candidly give it highly in favor of both language and method. I sincerely think the workmanship is infinitely too good for such vile matter. I do not either rake together a parcel of words, by way of exposing them for hard words, which for what appears to the contrary in the Review, may, where properly connected and employed, afford not the least idea of that pedantry they do, when industriously assembled together

ther out of above five hundred pages through which they were innocently scattered. I have not chicaned Dr. Smellie on the technical terms he has used. Some of them perhaps as harsh, as novel, as affected, and as uncouth, as those he has been pleased to object to in me. I repeat those unfortunate words of mine here, *torturous, palpation, sexual parts, conceptacle, promptership, cherishment, transitoriness, instinctive repugnance, instrumentarian, occlusion, shreudness of fingers, revoltingness, deflexions of the uterus, aberration from the right line, detortion, divarication, the head retrograding into the pelvis, premature ab-lactation, effemination, &c.*

Now, if it appears that any of these words are ridiculously or affectedly used, I am far from defending them: all I shall say is, that the quotation of them in that accumulative unconnected manner does not at least support that charge: and for my own part, I have so bad a taste, as to think the single word of *accoucheur* big with more ridicule and absurdity than all of them put together. Opinions being free, the Reviewer is extremely welcome to treat this with as much contempt as he pleases.



But can any thing be more cruelly unfair, than the quotation he has so gravely given, of my answer to Dr. Smellie's bringing in Plato by the head and shoulders, as if I had lain any further stress on it, than just as it came in my way to take notice of the Dr's abuse of the definition of the uterus from that celebrated antient? would not any one believe, that I had rested the issue of the cause upon a point only transiently introduced, and *confessed* to be *unaccountable*? a reference to the passage itself, as it stands connected in the book, not unfairly detached, as it is given in the Reviewer's extract of it, would, most probably, be exempt from ridicule, even from those to whom no occasion for ridicule hardly can come amiss.

The Reviewer is pleased, from his own imagination, to accuse me of treating the men-practitioners as a band of *ruffians*. I have made use of no such term; but that I may not be suspected of prevarication, I acknowledge the having put the equivalent of that appellation into my charge against them, of innumerable *Murthers* in the DARK, *proved* against them, by *themselves*.

And

And certainly of a piece with all the unfairness of that detraction, employed to prejudice the public against a work purely calculated for the public's own discovery of a truth too much concealed from it, is that suppression of the justest and greatest apology for any harshness in my suggestions against the men-midwives, in that the very worst of those suggestions are taken and quoted chapter and verse from the men-midwives themselves. I repeat here my solemn defiance to their advocates, to point out one passage in my whole book, so full of severe, though just accusations, as are contained in my quotation from Daventer, a man-midwife, p. 463, of my treatise.—Since whence then is it unpardonable for a midwife to say less ill of the men-practitioners than what they say of one another? or was it fair, in giving the public what the public has a right to expect should be an impartial account of a book received, to suppress so material a circumstance in favour of a work condemned by the Reviewer for abusiveness?

The Critical Reviewer arraigns me of ignorance, for saying that instruments are unnecessary. I have done more than denied it.

If



If justice was as dear to him, as the error he  
 has taken under his protection, he would  
 confess, that I have unrefutably proved it.  
 The sacred truth is, that if I am culpable,  
 it is rather for not saying half the horrors  
 that I know or firmly believe of that exe-  
 crable practice with them, which, I repeat  
 here, what I have said in that work, the  
 men-midwives do not the less use for their  
 pretending to condemn them. To say no-  
 thing of the mothers and children murdered  
 by them, there are living monuments of the  
 rage of the men-practitioners in using that  
 wretched forceps, on which they value them-  
 selves so much : persons of both sexes, who  
 will carry to their graves such indelible marks  
 of the crush of the forceps, as would  
 never have taken place, but for the pragma-  
 tical outrages to Nature, in the attempt to  
 precipitate her work.

It is not then out of obstinacy, nor from  
 the false shame of owning an error, but  
 purely from my better knowledge of expe-  
 rimental practice, that I venture to treat with  
 the contempt I unaffectedly do that ignorant  
 attack of the Reviewer's on my method of  
 manual operation, in the redress of the uterus,

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from

from the circumstance of a wrong direction  
Upon which I beg leave to observe,

FIRST, that in my practice, I take great previous care not to suffer the uterus ever to engage itself, in a dangerous or scarce retrievable manner. The pains I take, which he turns into ridicule, for want of understanding either the nature or the drift of them, in watching and reducing the opposition of the uterus, not with my *legs*, nor with the *tip of my ear* he may be sure, but with my *hands*, or the fingers of my *hands*, are the very pains that prevent this engaging or intangling of the uterus, that is to say, when the internal orifice is either wholly, or too much in part so ill-situate, as not to leave outlet enough for the child. This is that obliquity of the uterus, of which neither Dr. Smellie, nor the Reviewer seem to have any notion, or at least any adequate one; and surely that woman can little expect, that the man who does not so much as know or admit the obliquity of the uterus, so as to regulate the manual operation by it, must be very little capable of preventing those extremities, which are his plea for his resorting to that bag of hardware the Reviewer would condemn me to



to apply to, who always take care that it shall not be wanted.

And SECONDLY, that even in the worst cases, when the mis-practice, negligence, and ignorance of the men-midwives have occasioned those severe dilemmas, in which the Reviewer supposes I could not do without recourse to men or instruments, I not only tell him here, but am ready to demonstrate before any assembly of physicians or surgeons, that there is more chance for saving the life both of mother and child, by gentle methods, by the management with the hand in aid of Nature, than by resorting to the violence of those murderous instruments. But as I have at large explained myself in my treatise, upon this head of severe labors, it would be superfluous to enter into repetition here.

As to the Reviewer's want of conception how the child can get *engaged* too much, where he says, "*engage itself, where? in the uterus, where it is already, or in the passage where it ought to be.*" Which he is much at liberty to treat as nonsense, since that nonsense is perfectly of his own making: I shall only observe, for the satisfaction of

those unversed in the art of midwifery, including the Reviewer, and without excepting Dr. Smellie, that by the child's getting engaged, I mean that situation of it, when while still in the uterus, its passage out is blocked up by its own weight, bearing down the uterus under the os pubis, so as that the inward orifice does not present in a due line with the external one, but is either totally hid, or presents only an insufficient segment of the circle of the orifice. A case always difficult, but which ofteneft might have been prevented in due time by the midwife's proper care and unremitting attention. Whereas the men-midwives, in such cases, either resort to the utmost extremities, killing either the mother, the child, or both; or if the overture admits of a dilatation, do such dreadful violence to that part with instruments, that if even the woman's life or her child's is saved, it is never without great damage to both. Callosities are at best no unfeldom the consequence of this practice which at least cause difficult labors in future. Sometimes the *procidentia uteri*, or relaxation of the vagina, are the effects of the men-practitioner's management in this case.



But let any husband, who values the life of his wife and child; let any woman, who values her own life, and that of her infant, stop an instant here, and reflect on the consequences of being misled by one, I mean, Dr. Smellie, who scarcely seems to know the existence of such a case as the obliquity of the uterus; or by the Reviewer, who not denying it, is not ashamed of flying in the face of common-sense in his assertion, that the supposing the uterus to be so apt to return to its obliquity, is *ridiculous* and *unnecessary*. Whereas nothing is more true, nor more likely to be true, that at least nine in ten of the severe labors are specifically owing to this very obliquity, and that there is not one of those cases of obliquity, but what requires more or less of that attention and care to reduce and fix it, which are called *ridiculous* and *unnecessary*, though the two lives of mother and child so often depend on it. But why is so obvious a point of manual operation suppressed, denied, or exploded? The reason is as obvious for its being suppressed, denied, or exploded. It is not *man's work*: though the neglect of it will surely cut out what is commonly understood by *man's work*;

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delivering with instruments, or, in other words importing the same effect, *murdering* or *maiming*.

It would be here superfluously tedious to proceed animadverting upon all the absurdities and false criticisms of the Reviewer on this article, having noted what I take to be the principal ones, so that any silence of mine on the rest, being really occasioned by contempt, will not, I hope, be mistaken for any acquiescence in what I think either beneath refutation; or out of respect to my readers, not to need refutation; for after all, railing can never be supposed to pass for reasoning.

However, I will give the Critical Reviewer this satisfaction: I assure him of my sincerely believing, that the cause of which he makes himself an advocate will triumph over the right of mine. His clients have got a footing, which they are too powerful and too interested not to maintain. By getting into the *secrets*, and into the most intimate confidence of so many families, their ascendant seems too rivetted for Truth and Reason, with their cold and timid friends, to overcome, in an age, when almost universal indolence seems to exclude the examination,  
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of points of the utmost importance to be examined, and therefore the most neglected. The men-midwives, in short, seems to be a kind of formidable phalanx of mercenaries, with influence enough to brave all endeavours to establish the renounced laws of even Nature herself, where they clash with their interest. By dint of inculcating the falsest fears they have accomplished their great point of admission from society, that groans under an oppression, of which it cannot but see and feel the horrid ridicule, and yet wants spirit and resolution enough to shake it off. In the mean time, the men who like their wives to be lain by the he-midwives, and the women who *chuse* that he-midwives should lay them, especially as their superior art of *titillation* is so well vouched by their advocate, will certainly not ask my leave, nor probably take my advice about it, while, on my part, my worst wish to them is that, in consequence of such a choice, they may never meet with reason to repent it!

But as the impartial author of the Critical review has been so candidly pleased to represent that work of mine as a pitiful production, without method, or knowledge of my

my subject, a mere abusive libel on the gentlemen-midwives, a piece of absurdity, destitute of common-sense, a mixture, in short, of malice and presumption, I hope none will impute it to me as an author's vanity, if in my endeavour to cancel impressions so unfairly attempted to be given, I present the reader here with a succinct analysis of a book, which has been happy enough to deserve the wrath of that candid critic.

I have therein stated the several objections on behalf of the men-midwives, of which the following is the summary.

That the men it is who were the first in possession of the art of midwifery, because they were the inventors of all arts :

That the nobility of this art intitles them to the preference in it :

That the works which the men have composed on this subject demonstrate the antiquity of their making a profession of it :

That all the manual operations are *man's* work :



That anatomy is absolutely requisite in this art, and that instruments can only be used by men :

That it is only the ignorant who exclaim against instruments :

That it is in women a great presumption to enter into competition with the men in this profession :

That it is a truth now universally well-known, that there is more safety in the lyings-in being managed by the men than by the women :

That the women are ignorance itself incarnate :

That the men who apply themselves to one branch are the best artists, as the dentists, the oculists, &c.

That the men-midwives accomplish the most difficult deliveries :

That Fashion and custom have at length decided the point clearly in favor of the men :

That, in short, it can only be a *false modesty*, that opposes the women submitting to be lain by men-midwives.

To these objections I have endeavoured to oppose and establish the following reflexions :

That the women have a prior title to the office of a midwife, as may be demonstrated from the most antient and most authentic annals of the world :

That if this profession appears, at present, so noble an one to the men, the greater is the honor to the women, from whom they have learned all the best that they know of it :

That the books in which they have treated of it go no higher than Hippocrates, granting that those books upon midwifery are his, for they are certainly unworthy of a man so great in other points ; but that the women exercised this art thousands of years before him :

That the manual operation of the men-midwives being by no means necessary, while all that can ever be wanted may be better done without them ; this objection falls to the ground of itself.

That anatomical knowledge is not requisite, at most, beyond a certain moderate degree,



gree, for the practice of midwifery; the midwives having, ever since the first ages of the world, done very well with that small competency of knowledge of the female body to which they pretend; their business not being to dissect women, but to lay them; an operation which commonly does not need more than a dextrous expert hand, and a very small insight into anatomy; that besides, several women have written with great practical propriety on this subject, such as Cleopatra Queen of Egypt, Aspasia, and others, among the antients; among the moderns, Justine, midwife to the Electress of Brandenburg; and many more of the female professors of that art, from the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris: \*

That the instruments invented by the gentlemen-midwives are in truth fit to be used by none but themselves, whose hands, callous

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\* This is that *Hôtel-Dieu*, which Boerhave's Commentator, La Motte a man-midwife himself, and all authors in general who mention it, do the justice of allowing to be the best school of midwifery in all Europe. But what are such poultry authorities to that of the critic of this work, who calls it "*the most dirty, slovenly, inconvenient, indecent, shocking, receptacle for the sick in all Europe?*"

with handling them, are barely more tender and whose hearts can only dispute hardness with them; that Nature herself shudders at the idea of those barbarous implements, and that it must only be an inconceivable blindness, which without the least necessity, can suffer such a number of innocent victims to be sacrificed to the experiments made with them.

That ignorance must conspire with the most iniquitous keenness for fees to forge the necessity of those murderous instruments since experience demonstrates, not only such a rarity of extraordinary cases, as might very well dispense from a body of men being kept up armed with those instruments of pretended aid, but that even in those extraordinary cases, the midwives have accomplished the most difficult deliveries without the help of them, as I have proved it by examples of my own knowledge, and from what others may, on any the least inquiry find to be true, of the practice by women only at the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris :

That in women it is certainly no presumption to undertake the disputing excellence with men in this profession; that on the contrary



contrary, it is great rashness as well as great meanness of spirit, in men, so disqualified as they are by Nature for it, to incroach on a purely female function, and for want of natural requisites, to introduce supplementally their inhuman and murderous instruments; that in women, in short, this art is manifestly the vocation of Nature; in men, as manifestly the instigation of Interest.

That it is a most impudent falsity to aver, that the greater safety for the women is on the side of the men-practitioners; for that, in any given number of women lain by those of their own sex, and of those lain by men, reason, nature and experience all concur to give the preference to the women in point of safety; the murders of mothers and children being necessarily and infinitely oftener the consequence of employing men and instruments, than in trusting even to the most ignorant of the women, which ought also to be avoided:

That the pretended ignorance of the women-professors, speaking of such in general, is a pitiful pretext and a ridiculous accusation, since daily and common experience shows,  
that

that they know enough to do their business competently and artistly, while the pretended knowledge and boasted improvements of the men-midwives have made no further progress in that art, unless the killing and massacring an infinite number of women and children, by their awkwardness, and especially by their diabolical invention of their instruments, may be termed a progress :

That nothing can be worse supported than that superiority which the men-midwives pretend to derive from their addicting themselves solely and particularly to the study of the art of midwifery, since that superiority can have no relation but to their superior skill in handling instruments, forever dangerous, and forever useless ; what there is ever required of surgeon's work being better trusted to compleat surgeons, than to a common man-midwife, who now-a-day is not content with giving himself out for a man-midwife only, which by the by he never can be, but he must be surgeon and physician with all, and by pretending to so much, is rarely above a dangerous smattering in any of those branches.

That



That the argument drawn from the prevalence of the fashion proves nothing, more than that the public often suffers itself to be imposed upon by the most flagrant quackeries and pretences, and that it may, for a time, yeild to the contagious torrent of prejudice and example. Notwithstanding which, the modesty of the English women, still keeps numbers of them from making use of men to conduct their lyings-in, while in almost all the other parts of the world, the employing of women in exclusion of the men still prevails, most undoubtedly not to the detriment of population :

That even among the women who employ the gentlemen-midwives, there are many, who, not without the justest and the sensibelest repugnance, employ them in compliance with husbands, fathers, or relations, weak enough to sacrifice their honor to the most indecent and the most pernicious of all fashions :

That the scandalous *touchings* of men, who can scarce be thought proof against sensuality, their frequent or superfluous inspections, their secret and repeated examinations, the reciprocal attraction of the two sexes, the temptations so likely to occur in the course  
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of such practical interviews, prove at least a great easiness and faith in a husband, silly enough to let himself be carried away by this torrent of prejudice. Thus Modesty, without incurring the charge of being false, and much less of being foolish, may very well murmur at such privacies and approaches in any other man than a husband, especially to no purpose but that of increasing pain and danger, which they are so impudently pleaded to be designed to lessen; while, in short, the insult offered to the persons of the women, in the immodesty to which they are subjected by the practice of men-midwives, can only be matched by the insult offered to their understanding, in the pretence of service or assistance to them.

These reflexions compose the first part of my book. I employ the second in making observations on the labor and delivery of women, and in putting every candid inquirer into a way of satisfying himself, by the clearest matters of fact, and inferences therefrom, of the uselessness and danger of instruments in lyings-in, in proving, in short, that they are only made use of as stales and blinds by designing men to countenance their intrusion



intrusion into a business so little made for them, no matter how much humankind suffers by the murderous consequences of their miserable pretence and imposition. I have set forth all the rare and difficult cases in which those same instruments are by the men-midwives themselves pretended indispensable, and shown how a delivery might be more safely and more happily effectuated *without* them. I have quoted, from the men-midwives *themselves*, many murders, with shocking and unheard of circumstances of cruelty, which, to every thinking reader, will appear the unavoidable consequences of using instruments; so that they have not to plead, that those cases were purely accidents imputable to particular practitioners, and not to be drawn into consequence against the practice itself.

Such is the work, the advocate for the men-midwives in the character of a Reviewer has treated in a manner, for which however I have no right to complain of him; since having left me all that I pretend to, truth and argument unimpeached by anything he has brought against me, I can easily forgive him his by me unenvied superiority

ority in wit, where I aimed only at reason; and in personal abuse, while I never designedly transgressed that general raillery, of which the matter I was treating afforded me so ample a field; and which was never levelled against the writer nor the man, but purely against the *man-MIDWIFE*, whom there can be no-one that considers the object, but must allow to be fair game.

• F I N I S .